

Mr. Bannister Jun.^r in Zaphna.



What means this lake of blood that lies before me!
Act 4.th Scene 3.^d

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MAHOMET

THE IMPOSTOR.

A

TRAGEDY.

As it is Acted at the

THEATRE-SROYAL

IN

Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden.

Written by the Rev. Mr. MILLER.



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M DCC LXXVIII.

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PROLOGUE.

TO point what lengths credulity has run,
What counsels shaken, and what states undone;
What bellish fury wings th' enthusiast's rage,
And makes the troubled earth one tragic stage;
What blasphemies Imposture dare advance,
And build what terrors on weak ignorance;
How fraud alone rage to religion binds,
And makes a Pandæmonium of our minds;
Our Gallic bard, fir'd with these glorious views,
First to his Crusade led the tragic muse;
Her power through France his charming numbers bore,
But France was deaf—for all her priests were sore.

On English ground she makes a firmer stand,
And hopes to suffer by no hostile hand.
No clergy here usurp the free-born mind,
Ordain'd to teach, and not enslave mankind:
Religion here bids persecution cease;
Without, all order, and within, all peace;
Truth guards her happy pale with watchful care,
And frauds, though pious, find no entrance there.

Religion, to be sacred, must be free;
Men will suspect—where bigots keep the key.
Hooded and train'd, like hawks, th' enthusiasts fly,
And the priests with arms in their pounces die.
Like whelps born blind, by mother church they're bred,
Nor wake to fight, to know themselves misled:
Murder's the game—and to the sport unpress,
Proud of the sin, and in the duty blest,
The layman's but the bloodhound of the priest.
Where'er thou art, that dar'st such themes advance,
To priest-rid Spain repair, or slavish France
For Juda's hire there do the devil's task,
And trick up slavery in religion's mask.
England still free, no surer means requires
To sink their sottish souls, and damp their martial fires.

Britons, these numbers to yourselves you owe;
Voltaire hath strength to shoot in Shakespeare's bow:
Fame led him at his Hippocrene to drink,
And taught to write with Nature, as to think:
With English freedom, English wit be knew,
And from the inexhausted stream profusely drew.
Cerber's the noble bard yourselves have made,
Nor let the frauds of France steal all our trade.
Now of each prize the winner has the wearing,
E'en send our English stage a privateering:
With your commission we'll our sails unfold,
And from their loads of dross, import some gold.

EPILOGUE.

LONG has the shameful licence of the age,
With senseless ribaldry disgrac'd the stage;
So much indecencies have been in vogue,
They pledged custom in an epilogue;
As if the force of reason was a yoke
So heavy—they must ease it with a joke;
Disarm the moral of it's virtuous sway,
Or else the audience go displeas'd away.
How have I blus'd, to see a tragic queen,
With ill-tim'd mirth disgrace the well-wrote scene;
From all the sad solemnity of woe,
Trip nimbly forth—to ridicule a beau;
Then, as the loosest airs she had been gleaming,
Coquette the fan, and leger a double-meaning.
Shame on those arts that prostitute the bays!
Shame on the bard, who this way hopes for praise!
The bald, but honest author of to-night,
Disdains to please you, if he please not right!
If in his well-meant scene you chance to find,
Aught to ennoble or enlarge the mind;
If he has found the means, with honest art,
To fix the noblest wishes in the heart;
In softer accents to inform the fair,
How bright they look, when virtue drops the tear;
Enjoy, with friendly welcome, the repast,
And keep the heart-felt relish to the last.



Dramatis Personæ.

MAHOMET,
 MIRVAN, his General.
 ALI,
 HERCIPES, } Officers of Mahomet.
 AMMON, }
 ZAPHNA, } Captains brought up under
 PALMIRA, } Mahomet.
 ALCANOR, Chief of the Senate of Mecca.
 PHARON, his Friend.

SCENE, MECCA.

MAHOMET.

ACT I.

SCENE, an Apartment in the Temple of Mecca.

Enter Alcanor and Pharon.

Alc. PHARON, no more—Shall I
Fall prostrate to an arrogant impostor,
Homage in Mecca one I banish'd thence,
And incense the delusions of a rebel!
No—blast Alcanor, righteous Heav'n! If e'er
This hand, yet free and uncontaminate,
Shall league with fraud, or adulate a tyrant.

Pha. August and sacred chief of Ishmael's senate,
This zeal of thine, paternal as it is,
Is fatal now—our impotent resistance
Controuls not Mahomet's unbounded progress;
But, without weak'ning, irritates the tyrant.
When once a citizen, you well condemn'd him
As an obscure, seditious innovator:
But now he is a conqueror, prince, and pontiff;
Whilst nations numberless embrace his laws,
And pay him adoration—E'en in Mecca
He boasts his proselytes.

Alc. Such proselytes
Are worthy of him—low; untutor'd reptiles,
In whom sense only lives—most credulous still
Of what is most incredible!

Pha. Be such
Disdain'd, my lord; but mayn't the pest spread up-
wards,
And seize the head—Say, is the senate sound?
I fear some members of that rev'rend class
Are mark'd with the contagion; who, from views,
Of higher power and rank,
Worship this rising sun, and give a sanction
To his invasions.

Alc. If, ye powers divine!
Ye mark the movements of this nether world,
And bring them to account, crush, crush those vi-
Who, singled out by a community [pers,
To guard their rights, shall, for a grasp of ore,
Or paltry office, sell 'em to the foe!

Pha. Each honest citizen, I grant, is thine,
And, grateful for thy boundless blessings on them,
Would serve thee with their lives; but the approach
Of this usurper to their very walls
Strikes 'em with such a dread, that even these
Implore thee to accept his proffer'd peace.

Alc. Oh, people, lost to wisdom, as to glory!
Go, bring in pomp, and serve upon your knees
This idol, that will crush you with it's weight.
Mark, I abjure him: by his savage hand
My wife and children perish'd, whilst in vengeance
I carry'd carnage to his very tent,

Transfix'd to earth his only son, and wore
His trappings as a trophy of my conquest.
This torch of enmity thus lighted 'twixt us,
The hand of time itself can ne'er extinguish.

Pha. Extinguish not, but smother for a while
It's fatal flame, and greatly sacrifice
Thy private suff'rings to the public welfare.
Oh, say, Alcanor, wert thou to behold
(As soon thou may'st) this fam'd metropolis
With ~~sons~~ begirt, behold it's pining tenants
Prey on each other for the means of life,
Whilst lakes of blood, and mountains of the slain,
Putrify the air,
And sweep off thousands with their pois'nous steams,
Would thy slain children be aveng'd by this?

Alc. No, Pharon, no; I live not for myself.
My wife and children lost, my country's now
My family.

Pha. Then let not that be lost.

Alc. 'Tis lost by cowardice.

Pha. By rashness, often.

Alc. Pharon, desist.

Pha. My noble lord, I cannot,
Must not desist, will not, since you're possess'd
Of means to bring this insolent invader
To any terms you'll claim.

Alc. What means?

Pha. Palmira,

That blooming fair, the flow'r of all his camp,
By thee borne off in our last skirmish with him,
Seems the divine ambassadress of peace,
Sent to procure our safety. Mahomet
Has, by his heralds, thrice propos'd her ransom,
And bade us fix the price.

Alc. I know it, Pharon.
And wouldst thou then restore this noble treasure
To that barbarian;

And render beauty the reward of rapine?
Nay, smile not, friend, nor think that at these years,
Well travell'd in the winter of my days,
I entertain a thought tow'rd this young beauty,
But what's as pure as is the western gale,
That breathes upon the uncropt violet—

Pha. My lord—

Alc. This heart, by age and grief congeal'd,
Is no more sensible to love's endearments,
Than are our barren rocks to morn's sweet dew,
That balmy trickles down their rugged cheeks.

Pha. My noble chief, each master-piece of nature
Commands involuntary homage from us.

Alc. I own a tenderness, unfelt before,
A sympathetic grief, with ardent wishes
To make her happy, fill'd my widow'd bosom.

I dread her being in that monster's power,
And burn to have her hate him, like myself.
'Twas on this hour I, at her modest suit,
Promis'd her audience in my own pavilion.
Pharon, go thou, meanwhile, and see the senate
Assembled straight—I'll sound 'em as I ought.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE changes to a Room of State.

Enter Palmira.

Pal. What means this boding terror that usurps,
In spite o' me, dominion o'er my heart!
Oh, holy prophet!
Shall I ne'er more attend thy sacred lessons?
Oh, Zaphna! much-lov'd youth! I feel for thee
As for myself.—But hold, my final audit
Is now at hand—I tremble for th' event!
Here comes my judge—Now liberty, or bondage!

Enter Alcanor.

Alc. Palmira, whence those tears? Trust me,
fair-maid,
Thou art not fall'n into barbarians hands;
What Mecca can afford of pomp or pleasure,
To call attention from misfortune's lap,
Demand and share it.

Pal. No, my generous victor,
My suit's for nothing Mecca can afford;
Pris'n'd these two long months beneath your roof,
I've tasted such benignity and candour,
Whilst your own hands so labour'd to beguile
The anxious moments of captivity,
That oft I've call'd my tears ingratitude.

Alc. If aught remains, that's in my power, to
smooth

The rigour of your fate, and crown your wishes,
Why, 'twould fill
The furrows in my cheeks, and make old age
Put on it's summer's garb!

Pal. Thus low I bless thee. [*Kneeling.*]
It is on you, on you alone, Alcanor,
My whole of future happiness depends.
Have pity, then:
Pity, Alcanor, one who's torn from all
That's dear or venerable to her soul;
Restore me then, restore me to my country,
Restore me to my father, prince, and prophet.

Alc. Is slav'ry dear then? is fraud venerable?
What country? a tumultuous, wand'ring camp!

Pal. My country, Sir, is not a single spot
Of such a mold, or fix'd to such a clime!
No, 'tis the social circle of my friends,
The lov'd community in which I'm link'd,
And in whose welfare all my wishes center.

Alc. Excellent maid! Then Mecca be thy coun-
Robb'd of my children, would Palmira deign [*try.*]
To let me call her child, the toil I took
To make her destiny propitious to her,
Would lighten the burden of my own.
But no; you scorn my country, and my laws.

Pal. Can I be yours, when not my own? Your
bounties

Claim and share my gratitude.—But Mahomet
Claims right o'er me of parent, prince, and prophet.

Alc. Of parent, prince, and prophet! Heavens!
that robber,

Who, a scap'd felon, emulates a throne;
And scoffer at all faiths, proclaims a new one!

Pal. Oh! cease, my lord; this blasphemous abuse
On one whom millions with myself adore,
Does violence to my ear; such black prophaneness
Gains't heav'n's interpreter, blots out remembrance
Of favours past, and nought suggests but horror.

Alc. Oh, superstition! thy pernicious rigours,
Inflexible to reason, truth, and nature,

Banish humanity the gentlest breasts!—

Palmira, I lament to see thee plung'd
So deep in error.—

Pal. Do you then reject
My just petition? Can Alcanor's goodness
Be deaf to suff'ring virtue?

Name but the ransom,
And Mahomet will treble what you ask.

Alc. There is no ransom Mahomet can offer
Proportion'd to the prize. Trust me, Palmira,
I cannot yield thee up. What! to a tyrant,
Who wrongs thy youth, and mocks thy tender heart
With vile illusions, and fanatic terrors!—

Enter Pharon.

What wouldst thou, Pharon?

Pba. From yon western gate,
Which opens on Moradia's fertile plains,
Mahomet's gen'ral, Mirvan, hastes to greet thee.
Alc. Mirvan, that vile apostate!

Pba. In one hand
He holds a scimitar, the other bears
An olive-branch; which to our chiefs he waves,
An emblem of his suit—a martial youth,
Zaphna by name, attends him for our hostage.

Pal. [*Apart.*] Zaphna! Mysterious Heav'n!
Pba. Mirvan advances

This way, my lord, to render you his charge.

Alc. Palmira, thou retire—Pharon, be present.

[*Exit Palmira.*]

Enter Mirvan.

After six years of infamous rebellion
Against thy native country, dost thou, Mirvan,
Again prophane, with thy detested presence,
These sacred walls, which once thy hands defended,
But thy bad heart has vilely since betray'd?
Thou poor deserter of thy country's gods,
Thou base invader of thy country's rights,
What wouldst thou have with me?

Mir. I'd pardon thee—

Out of compassion to thy age and suff'rings,
And high regard for thy experienc'd valour,
Heav'n's great apostle offers thee in friendship
A hand could crush thee; and I come commission'd
To name the terms of peace he deigns to tender.

Alc. He deigns to tender! Insolent impoitor!
Dost thou not, Mirvan, blush

To serve this wretch—this base of soul, as birth?

Mir. Mahomet's grandeur's in himself; he shines
With borrow'd lustre. [*Exit Alc.*]

Plung'd in the night of prejudice, and bound
In fetters of hereditary faith,
My judgment slept; but when I found him born
To mould anew the prostrate universe,
I started from my dream, join'd his career,
And shar'd his arduous and immortal labours.
Once, I must own, I was as blind as thou;
Then wake to glory, and be chang'd like me.

Alc. What death to honour, wak'ning to such
glory!

Pba. Oh, what a fall from virtue was that change!
Mir. Come, embrace our faith, reign with Ma-
homet;

And, cloath'd in terrors, make the vulgar tremble.
Alc. 'Tis Mahomet, and tyrants like to Ma-
homet;

'Tis Mirvan, and apostates like to Mirvan;
I only would make tremble.—Is it, say it thou,
Religion that's the parent of this rapine,
This virulence and rage?—No, true religion
Is always mild, propitious, and humane;
Plays not the tyrant, plants no faith in blood,
Nor bears destruction on her chariot-wheels,
But stoops to polish, succour, and redress,

And builds her grandeur on the public good.

Mr. Thou art turn'd Christian, sure! some
raggling monk

Has taught thee these tame lessons——

Alc. If the Christians

Hold principles like these, which reason dictates,
The Christians may be right:

Thy sect cannot; who, nurs'd in blood and slaughter,
Worship a cruel and revengeful being,
And draw him always with his thunder round him,
As ripe for the destruction of mankind.

Mr. If clemency delights thee, learn it here.

Though banish'd by thy voice his native city,
Though by thy hand robb'd of his only son,
Mahomet pardons thee; nay farther, begs
The hated burning 'twixt you be extinguish'd
With reconciliation's generous tear.

Alc. I know thy master's arts; his gen'rous tears,
Like the refreshing drops that previous fall
To the wild outrage of o'erwhelming earthquakes,
Only fore-run destruction;
Courage he has, not bravery;
For blood and havoc are the sure attendants
On his victorious car.

Pha. Leagues he will make too——

Alc. Like other grasping tyrants, till he eyes
A lucky juncture to enlarge his bounds;
Then he'll deride 'em, leap o'er ev'ry tie
Of sacred guarantee, or sworn protection,
And, when th' oppress'd ally implores assistance,
Beneath that mask, invade the wish'd-for realms,
And from pure friendship take them to himself.

Mr. Mahomet fights Heaven's battles, bends the
bow

To spread Heaven's laws, and to subject to faith
The iron neck of error.

Alc. Lust and ambition, Mirvan, are the springs
Of all his actions, whilst, without one virtue,
Dissimulation, like a flatterer's painter,
Bedecks him with the colouring of them all.

This is thy master's portrait——But no more——
My soul's inexorable, and my hate
Immortal as the cause from whence it sprung.

Mr. What cause——

Alc. The difference between good and evil.

Mr. Thou talk'st to me, Alcanor, with an air
Of a stern judge, that from his dread tribunal
Threatenates the criminal beneath him.

Resume thy temper, act the minister,
And treat with me as with th' ambassador
Of Heaven's apostle, and Arabia's king.

Alc. Arabia's king! What king? Who crown'd

Mr. Conquest.—— [him?]

Whilst to the stile of conqueror, and of monarch,
Patron of peace he'd add——Name then the price
Of peace and of Palmira——Boundless treasures,
The spoils of vanquish'd monarchs, and the stores
Of ridged provinces, are thrown before thee.

Our troops, with matchless ardour, hasten hither
To lay in ruin this rebellious city;
Stem, then, the rushing torrent: Mahomet
In person comes to claim a conference with thee
For this good purpose.

Alc. Who! Mahomet!

Mr. Yes, he conjures thou'lt grant it.

Alc. Traitor, were I sole ruler here in Mecca,
I'd answer thee with chastisement——

Mr. Hot man!

I pity thy false virtue——But farewell——
And since the senate share thy power in Mecca,
To their serener wisdoms I'll appeal. [Exit Mirv.

Alc. I'll meet thee there, and see whose voice is
victor.——

Come, Pharon, aid me to repulse this traitor;
To bear him, with impunity, amongst us,
Is treason 'gainst ourselves——Ye sacred pow'rs,
My country's gods, that for three thousand years
Have reign'd protectors of the tribe of Ishmael!
Oh, support my spirit,
In that firm purpose it has always held,
To combat violence, fraud, and usurpation;
To pluck the spoil from the oppressor's jaws,
And keep my country, as I found it, free! [Exit.



A C T II.

S C E N E, Palmira's Apartment.

Enter Palmira.

Pal. C E A S E, cease, ye streaming instruments of
woe,

From your ignoble toil——Take warmth, my heart,
Collect thy scatter'd powers, and brave misfortune.
In vain the storm-tost mariner repines;
Were he within to raise as great a tempest,
As beats him from without, it would not smooth
One boist'rous surge: impatience only throws
Discredit on mischance, and adds a shame
To our affliction.——

Enter Zaphna.

Ha! all-gracious Heav'n!
Thou, Zaphna! is it thou? What pitying angel
Guided thy steps to these abodes of bondage?

Zaph. Thou sov'reign of my soul, and all it's
Object of every fear and every wish; [powers;
Friend, sister, love, companion, all that's dear!
Do I once more behold thee, my Palmira!
Oh, I will set it down the whitest hour
That Zaphna e'er was blest with!——

Pal. Say, my hero——

Are my ills ended, then? They are, they are:
Now Zaphna's here, I am no more a captive,
Except to him: Oh, blest captivity!

Zaph. Those smiles are dearer to my raptur'd
breast,

Sweeter those accents to my list'ning heart,
Than all Arabia's spices to the sense.

Pal. No wonder that my soul was so elate;
No wonder that the cloud of grief gave way,
When thou, my sun of comfort, wert so nigh.

Zaph. Since that dire hour, when on Sabaria's
The barb'rous foe depriv'd me of Palmira, [strand
in what a gulph of horror and despair,
Have thy imagin'd perils plung'd my soul!
Stretch'd on expiring cores, for a while
To the deaf stream I pour'd out my complaint,
And begg'd I might be number'd with the dead
That strew'd it's banks——Then, starting from de-
spair,

With rage I flew to Mahomet for vengeance:
He, for some high, mysterious purpose, known
To Heav'n and him alone, at length dispatch'd
The valiant Mirvan to demand a truce.
Instant, on wings of lightning I pursu'd him,
And enter'd as his hostage——fix'd, Palmira,
Or to redeem, or die a captive with thee.

Pal. Heroic youth!

Zaph. But how have these barbarians
Treated my fair?

Pal. With high humanity.

I, in my victor, found a friend——Alcanor
Has made me feel captivity in nothing
But absence from my Zaphna and my friends.——

Zaph. I grieve a soul so generous is our foe;
But now, presented as a hostage to him,

His noble bearing and humanity
Made captive of my heart; I felt, methought,
A new affection lighted in my breast,
And wonder'd whence the infant ardour sprang.

Pal. Yet, gen'rous as he is, not all my prayers,
Not all the tears I lavish at his feet,
Can move him to restore me——

Zaph. But he shall——
Let the barbarian know he shall, Palmira;
The god of Mahomet, our divine protector,
Whose still triumphant standard I have borne
O'er piles of vanquish'd infidels—that power
Which brought unnumber'd battlements to earth,
Will humble Mecca too.——

Enter Mirvan.

Well, noble Mirvan,
Do my Palmira's chains sit loose upon her;
Say, is it freedom? This presumptuous senate——

Mir. Has granted all we ask'd, all we could
wish——

The truce obtain'd, the gates to Mahomet
Flew open——

Zaph. Mahomet in Mecca! say'st thou?
Once more in Mecca!

Pal. Transport, bid him welcome!

Zaph. Thy sufferings then are o'er, the ebb is
past,

And a full tide of hope flows in upon us.

Mir. The spirit of our prophet, that inspir'd me,
Breath'd such divine persuasion from my lips,
As shook the reverend fathers—Sirs, cried I,
This fav'rite of high Heav'n, who rules in battle,
Before whose footstool, tributary kings
Bow the anointed head, born here in Mecca,
Asks but to be enroll'd a senator,
And you refuse his pray'r. Deluded sages!
Although your conqueror, he requests no more
Than one day's truce, pure pity to yourselves!
To give you, if he can; and you—Oh, shame!—
At this a gen'ral murmur spread around,
Which seem'd propitious to us——

Zaph. Greatly carried!
Go on——

Mir. Then straight th' inflexible Alcanor
Flew through the streets, assembling all the people,
To bar our prophet. Thither too I fled,
Urg'd the same arguments, exhorting, threaten'd,
Till they unhung the gates, and gave free passage
To Mah'met and his chiefs.—In vain, Alcanor,
And his dishearten'd party, strove to oppose him;
Serene and dauntless, through the gazing crowd,
With more than human majesty he mov'd,
Bearing the peaceful olive, whilst the truce
Was instantly proclaim'd——

Pal. But where's the prophet?

Mir. Reclin'd in yonder grove that joins the temple.
Attended by his chiefs.

Zaph. There let us haste
With duteous step, and bow ourselves before him.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE changes to a spacious Grotto.

Mahomet discovered, with the Alcanor before him.

Mab. Glorious hypocrits! What fools are they,
Who fraught with lustful or ambitious views,
Wear not thy specious mask—Thou, Alcanor!
Hast won more battles, ta'en more cities for me,
Than thrice my feeble numbers had achiev'd,
Without the succour of thy sacred impulse——

Enter Hercides, Ammon, and Ali.
Invincible supporters of our grandeur!
My faithful chiefs, Hercides, Ammon, Ali!
Go and instruct this people in my name;
That faith may dawn, and, like a morning-star,

Be herald to my rising.

Lead them to know, and to adore my God!
But, above all, to fear him——Lo, Palmira!

[*Exeunt Hercides, &c.*]

Her angel-face, with unfeign'd blushes spread,
Proclaims the purity that dwells within——

Enter Mirvan, Zaphna, and Palmira.

[*To Palmira.*] The hand of war was ne'er before
so barbarous,
Never bore from me half so rich a spoil,
As thee, my fair.

Pal. Joy to my heav'nly guardian!
Joy to the world, that Mahomet's in Mecca!

Mab. My child, let me embrace thee——How's
Thou here! [this, Zaphna!]

Zaph. [Kneeling.] My father, chief, and holy
pontiff!

The god that thou'rt inspir'd by, march'd before me,
Ready, for thee, to wade through seas of danger,
Or cope with death itself; I hither hasten'd,
To yield myself an hostage, and, with zeal,
Prevent thy order.

Mab. 'Twas not well, rash boy:

He that does more than I command him, errs
As much as he who falters in his duty,
And is not for my purpose—I obey
My god——implicitly obey thou me.

Pal. Pardon, my gracious lord, his well-meant
ardour.

Brought up, from tender infancy, beneath
The shelter of thy sacred patronage,
Zaphna and I've been animated still
By the same sentiments. Alas, great prophet!
I've had enough of wretchedness——To languish
A prisoner here, far both from him and you:
Grudge me not, then, the ray of consolation
His presence beam'd, nor cloud my dawning hope
Of rising freedom and felicity.

Mab. Palmira, 'tis enough; I read thy heart—
Be not alarm'd; tho' burden'd with the cares
Of thrones and altars, still my guardian eye
Will watch o'er thee, as o'er the universe.—
Follow my generals, Zaphna.—Fair Palmira,
Retire, and pay your powerful vows to Heaven,
And dread no wrongs but from Alcanor.—

[*Zaphna and Palmira go out separately.*]

Mirvan——

Attend thou here——'Tis time, my trusty soldier,
My long-try'd friend, to lay unfolded to thee,
The close resolves and councils of my heart.
The tedious length of a precarious siege,
May damp the present ardour of my troops,
And check me in the height of my career.
Let us not give deluded mortals leisure,
By reason to disperse the mystic gloom
We've cast about us.—Prepossession, friend,
Reigns monarch of the million—Mecca's crowd
Gaze at my rapid victories, and think
Some awful Power directs my arm to conquest.
But whilst our friends once more renew their efforts,
To win the wav'ring people to our interest,
What think'st thou, say, of Zaphna and Palmira?

Mir. As of thy most resign'd and faithful vassals.
Mab. Oh, Mirvan! they're the deadliest of my
foes. [foes.]
Mir. How!

Mab. Yes, they love each other——

Mir. Well—What crime?——

Mab. What crime, dost say?—Learn all my frailty,
My life's a combat: kern austerity [then—
Subjects my nature to abstemious bearings.
I've banish'd from my lips that trait'rous liquor,
That either works to practices of outrage,
Or melts the manly breast to woman's weakness;

On the burning sands, or desert rocks,
With thee I bear th' inclemency of climates,
Freeze at the pole, or scorch beneath the line.
For all these toils love only can retaliate,
The only consolation or reward;
Fruit of my labours, idol of my incense,
And sole divinity that I adore.

Know, then, that I prefer this young P. imira
To all the ripen'd beauties that attend me;
Dwell on her accents, doat upon her smiles,
And am not mine, but her's. Now, judge, my friend,
How vast the jealous transports of thy master,
When at his feet he daily hears this charmer
Avow a foreign love, and, insolent!
Give Mahomet a rival!

Mir. How! and Mahomet
Not instantly revenge—

Mab. Ah! should he not?
But better to detest him, know him better:
Learn then, that both my rival, and my love,
Sprang from the loins of this audacious tyrant.

Mir. Alcanor!

Mab. Is their father; old Hercides,
To whose sage institution I commit
My captive infants, late reveal'd it to me—
Perdition! I myself light up their flame,
And feed it till I set myself on fire.
Well; means must be employ'd; but see, the father:
He comes this way, and launches from his eye
Malignant sparks of enmity and rage.
Mirvan, see all ta'en care of; let Hercides,
With his escort, beset yon gate; bid Ali
Make proper disposition round the temple;
This done, return, and render me account
Of what success we meet with 'mongst the people:
Then Mirvan, we'll determine, or to loose,
Or bridle in our vengeance, as it suits. [Exit Mir.

Enter Alcanor.

Mab. Why dost thou start, Alcanor? Whence that
Is then my sight so baneful to thee? [horror?

Alc. Must I then bear this? Must I meet in Mecca,
On terms of peace, this spoiler of the earth?

Mab. Approach, old man, without a blush, since
Heav'n,

For some high end, decrees our future union.

Alc. I blush not for myself, but thee, thou tyrant;
For thee, bad man! who com'st, with serpent-guile,
To sow dissension in the realms of peace.

Thy very name sets families at variance,
'Twixt son and father bursts the bonds of nature,
And scares endearment from the nuptial pillow?
And is it, insolent dissembler! thus

Thou com'st to give the sons of Mecca peace,
And me an unknown god?

Mab. Were I to answer any but Alcanor,
That unknown god should speak in thunder for me:
But here with thee I'd parley as a man.

Alc. What canst thou say? What urge in thy
defence?

What right hast thou receiv'd to plant new faiths,
Or lay a claim to royalty and priesthood?

Mab. The right that a resolv'd and tower'd spirit,
Has o'er the growling instinct of the vulgar—

Alc. Patience, good Heavens! have I not known
thee, Mahomet,

When void of wealth, inheritance, or fame,
Rank'd with the lowliest of the low at Mecca?

Mab. Dost thou not know, thou haughty, feeble
That the low insect, lurking in the grass, (man,
And the imperial eagle, which aloft

Ploughs the ethereal plain, are both alike
In the Eternal eye—Mortals are equal;

It is not birth, magnificence, or pow'r,
But virtue only, makes the difference 'twixt them.

Alc. [Apart.] What sacred truth, from what
polluted lips!

Mab. By virtue's ardent pinions borne on high,
Heav'n met my zeal, gave me in solemn charge
It's sacred laws, then bade me on and publish.

Alc. And did Heav'n bid thee on and plunder too?

Mab. My law is active, and inflames the soul
With thirst of glory. What can thy dumb gods?
What laurels spring beneath their sooty altars!
Thy slothful sect disgrace the human kind,
Ennervate, lifeless images of men!

Mine bear th' intrepid soul; my faith makes heroes.

Alc. Go, preach these doctrines at Medina, where
By prostrate wretches, thou art rais'd to homage.

Mab. Hear me; thy Mecca trembles at my name:
If, therefore, thou wouldst save thyself or city,
Embrace my proffer'd friendship—What, to-day,
I thus solicit, I'll command to-morrow.

Alc. Contrast with thee a friendship! frontless?
Know'st thou a god can work that miracle? [man!

Mab. I do—Necessity—thy interest.

Alc. Interest is thy god; equity is mine.

Propose the tie of this unnatural union;

Say, is't the loss of thy ill-fated son,

Who, in the field, fell victim to my rage,

Or the dear blood of my poor captive children,

Shed by thy butchering hands?

Mab. Ay, 'tis thy children.

Mark me then well, and learn th' important secret
Which I'm sole master of—Thy children live.

Alc. Live!

Mab. Yes—both live—

Alc. What say'st thou? Both!

Mab. Ay, both.

Alc. And dost thou not beguile me?

Mab. No, old man.

Alc. Propitious heavens! Say, Mahomet, for now
Methinks I could hold endless converse with thee,
Say, what's their portion, liberty, or bondage?

Mab. Bred in my camp, and tutor'd in my law,
I hold the balance of their destinies;

And now 'tis on the turn—their lives, or deaths—
'Tis thine to say which shall preponderate.

Alc. Mine! Can I save them? Name the mighty
ransom—

If I must bear their chains, double the weight,
And I will kiss the hand that puts them on:

Or if my streaming blood must be the purchase,
Drain every sluice and channel of my body,

My swelling veins will burst to give it passage.

Mab. I'll tell thee then—renounce thy pagan
Abolish thy vain gods, and— [faith;

Alc. Ha!

Mab. Nay, more,
Surrender Mecca to me, quit this temple,

Assist me to impose upon the world,
Thunder my Koran to the gazing crowd,

Proclaim me for their prophet, and their king,
And be a glorious pattern of credulity

To Korah's stubborn tribe. These terms perform'd,
Thy son shall be restor'd; and Mah'met's self

Will deign to wed thy daughter.

Alc. Hear me, Mahomet—
I am a father, and this bosom boasts

A heart as tender as e'er parent bore.
After a fifteen-years of anguish for them,

Once more to view my children, clasp them to me,
And die in their embraces!—Melting thought!

But were I doom'd, or to enslave my country,
And help'd to spread black error o'er the earth;
Or to behold these blood-embued hands,

Deprive me of them both—Know me, then, Mahomet,

I'd not admit a doubt to cloud my choice—

[*Looking earnestly at Mahomet for some time before he speaks.*]

Farewel.

[*Exit Alcanor.*]

Mab. Why, fare thee well, then—Churlish do-
Inexorable fool! Now, by my arms, [tard!]
I will have great revenge; I'll meet thy scorn
With treble retribution.

Enter Mirvan.

Well, my Mirvan,
What say'st thou to it now?

Mir. Why, that Alcanor
Or we must fall.

Mab. Fall, then, th' obdurate rebel!

Mir. The truce expires to-morrow, when Alcanor
Again is Mecca's master, and has vow'd
Destruction on thy head: the senate too,
Have pass'd thy doom.

Mab. Those heart-chill'd, paltry babblers,
Plac'd on the bench of sloth, with ease can nod
And vote a man to death; why don't the cowards
Stand me in yonder plain?—With half their num-
bers,

I drove them headlong to their walls for shelter;
And he was deem'd the wisest senator,
That enter'd first the gate; but now they think
They've got me in the toils, their spirits mount,
And they could prove most valorous assassins—
Well, this I like—I always ow'd my greatness
To opposition; had I not met with struggles,
I'd been obscure—Enough—Perish Alcanor!
He marbled up, the pliant populace,
Those dupes of novelty will bend before us,
Like oars to a hurricane.

Mir. No time
Is to be lost.

Mab. But for a proper arm;
For, however irksome, we must save
Appearances, and mask it with the vulgar.

Mir. True, my sage chief—What think'st thou
then of Zaphna?

Mab. Of Zaphna, say'st thou!

Mir. Yes, Alcanor's hostage—
He can in private do thee vengeance on him.
Thy other favorites of maturer age,
And more discreetly zealous, would not risk it:
Youth is the stock, whence grafted superstition
Shoots with unbounded vigour. He's a slave
To thy despotic faith, and urg'd by thee,
However mild his nature may appear,
Howe'er humane and noble is his spirit,
Or strong his reason, where allow'd to reason,
He would, for Heaven's sake, martyr half mankind.

Mab. The brother of Palmira!

Mir. Yes, that brother,
The only son of thy outrageous foe,
And the incestuous rival of thy love.

Mab. I hate the stripling, loath his very name:
The manes of my son, too, cries for vengeance
On the curs'd fire; but then thou know'st my love,
Know'st from whose blood she sprang; this staggers,
And yet I'm here surrounded with a gulph [Mirvan,
Ready to swallow me; come too, in quest
Of altars and a throne—What must be done!—
My warring passions, like contending clouds,
When fraught with thunder's fatal fuel, burst
Upon themselves, and rend me with the shock.
And shall enervating, contagious love,
Hag my aspiring spirit, sink me down
To woman's shackles, make a lap-thing of me?
Glory! that must not be! ambition still.

And great revenge, impetuous urge their claims,
And must be notic'd. Mirvan, sound this youth
Touch not at once upon the startling purpose,
But make due preparation.

Mir. I'll attack him

With all the forces of enthusiasm:
There lies our strength.

Mab. First then, a solemn vow
To act whatever Heav'n by me enjoins him.
Next, omens, dreams, and visions may be pleas'd
Hints too of black designs by this Alcanor,
Upon Palmira's virtue, and his life.—
But to the proof—Be now propitious, fortune!
Then love, ambition, vengeance, jointly triumph

A C T III.

SCENE, a grand Apartment.

Enter Zaphna and Palmira.

Zaph. ALCANOR claim a private conference
What has he to unfold? [with u

Pal. I tremble, Zaphna.

Zaph. Time press'd too, did he say?

Pal. He did; then cast

A look so piercing on me, it o'erwhelm'd
My face with deep confusion: this he mark'd;
Then, starting, left me.

Zaph. [*Aside.*] Ha! this gives me fear
That Mirvan's jealousies are too well grounded;
But I must not distract her tender bosom
With visionary terrors.—[*To Pal.*] Both in private

Pal. In private both.

Zaph. Her virtue, and my life! [*Apart*]
It cannot be; so reverend a form
Could ne'er be pander to such black devices.

Pal. But let us shun it, Zaphna; much I fear
Alcanor has deceiv'd us: dread the treachery
Of this blood-thirsty senate. Trust me, Zaphna,
They've sworn the extirpation of our faith,
Nor care by what vile means—

Zaph. My soul's best treasure,
For whose security my ev'ry thought
Is up in arms, regardless of my own;
Shun thou Alcanor's presence. This hour, Palmira
Mirvan, by order of our royal pontiff,
Prepares to solemnize some act of worship
Of a more hallow'd and mysterious kind
Than will admit of vulgar eye. Myself
Alone am honour'd to assist.

Pal. Alone!

Zaph. Yes, to devote myself by solemn vow
For some great act, of which my fair's the priest

Pal. What act?

Zaph. No matter, since my lov'd Palmira
Shall be the glorious recompence.

Pal. Methinks I do not like this secret vow.
Why must I not be present? Were I with thee,
I should not be so anxious;
For, trust me, Zaphna, my affection for thee
Is of that pure, disinterested nature,
So free from passion's taint, I've no one with
To have thee more than thus; have thee my friend
Share thy lov'd converse, wait upon thy welfare,
And view thee with a sister's spotless eye.

Zaph. Angelic excellence!

Pal. And, let me tell thee,

This Mirvan, this fierce Mirvan, gives me terror
So far from tend'ring consolation to me,
His theme is blood and slaughter; as I met him,
His eyes flam'd fury, whilst in dubious phrase
He thus bespoke me—The destroying angel

Must be let loose—*Palмира*, Heav'n ordains
Some glorious deed for thee, yet hid in darkness;
Learn an implicit rev'rence for it's will,
And above all, I warn thee, fear for *Zaphna*.

Zaph. What could he mean? Can I believe, Al-
Thy fair deportment but a treach'rous mask? [canor,
Yet, spite of all the rage that ought to fire me
Against this rebel to our faith and prophet,
I've held me happy in his friendship,
And bondage wore the livery of choice.

Pal. How has Heav'n fraught our love-link'd
hearts, my *Zaphna*,

With the same thoughts, aversions, and desires!
Not for thy safety, and our dread religion,
That thunders hatred to all infidels,
With great remorse I should accuse *Alcanor*.

Zaph. Let us shake off this vain remorse, *Palмира*,
Resign ourselves to Heav'n, and act it's pleasure.
The hour is come that I must pledge my vow.

Doubt not but the Supreme, who claims this service,
Will prove propitious to our chaste endearments.
Farewel, my love; I fly to gain the summit
Of earth's felicity—to gain *Palмира*. [Exit.

Pal. Where'er I turn me here, 'tis all suspicion.
What means this vow! *Mirvan*, I like thee not.
Alcanor, too, distracts my tim'ous breast.
E'en *Mahmet's* self I dread whilst I invoke him.
Like one benighted 'midst a place of tombs,
I gaze around me, start at ev'ry motion,
And seem hemm'd in by visionary spectres.—
All-righteous Pow'r, whom, trembling, I adore,
And blindly follow, oh! deliver me
From these heart-rending terrors!—Ha! who's here?

Enter *Mahomet*.

'Tis he! 'tis *Mahomet* himself! kind Heav'n
Has sent him to my aid—My gracious lord,
Protect the dear, dear idol of my soul;
Save *Zaphna*; guard him from—

Mab. From what?—Why, *Zaphna*?

Whence this vain terror? Is he not with us?

Pal. Oh, Sir, you double now my apprehensions!
Those broken accents, and that eager look,
Shew you have anguish smothering at the heart,
And prove, for once, that *Mahomet's* a mortal.

Mab. [Apart.] Ha! I shall turn a traitor to myself!

Oh! woman, woman! hear me; ought I not
To be enrag'd at thy profane attachment?

How could thy breast, without the keenest sting,
Harbour one thought not dictated by me?

Is that young mind, I took such toil to form,
Turn'd an ingrate and infidel at once?

Awy, rebellious maid—

Pal. What dost thou say,

My royal lord? Thus prostrate at your feet,

Let me implore forgiveness, if in aught

I have offended; talk not to me thus;

A frown from thee, my father and my king,

Is death to poor *Palмира*. Say then, *Mahomet*,

Didst thou not in this very place permit him

To tender me his vows?

Mab. [Apart.] How the soft trait'refs racks me!

—Rise, *Palмира*—

Down, rebel joye! I must be calm—Come hither;

Beware, rash maid, of such imprudent steps,

They lead to guilt. What wild, pernicious errors

Mayn't the heart yield to, if not greatly watch'd!

Pal. In loving *Zaphna*, sure it cannot err;

There's nothing wild, nothing pernicious—

Mab. How!

This theme delights you—

Pal. I must own it does.

Yes, my great master; for I still have thought

That Heav'n itself approv'd of my affection,

And gave a sanction to our mutual ardours.

Can what was virtue once, be now a crime?

Can I be guilty—

Mab. Yes—towards me you are—

You, nurs'd from infancy beneath my eye,

Child of my care, and pupil of my faith;

You, whom my partial fondness still distinguish'd

From all the captive youths that grac'd my triumphs;

And you, who now, without my leave, permit

A slave to bear thee from my fight for ever.

Pal. No, we both live, nay more, would die for thee:

And, oh! my lord, if all that earth can offer,

Of grandeur, opulence, or pleasure, e'er

Shall make me deaf to gratitude's demands,

May *Zaphna's* self be evidence against me,

And plead for double vengeance on my treach'ry.

Mab. [Apart.] *Zaphna* again! Furies! I shall re-

And make her witness of my weakness. [Lapse!

Pal. Sir!

What sudden start of passion arms that eye!

Mab. Oh, nothing! pray, retire awhile; take
courage,

I'm not at all displeas'd; 'twas but to sound

The depth of thy young heart: I praise thy choice.

Trust then, thy dearest int'rest to my bosom:

But know, your fate depends on your obedience.

If I have been a guardian to your youth,

If all my lavish bounties past weigh aught,

Deserve the future blessings which await you.

Howe'er the voice of Heav'n dispose of *Zaphna*,

Confirm him in the path where duty leads,

That he may keep his vow, and merit thee.

Pal. Distrust him not, my sov'reign; noble *Zaphna*

Disdains to lag in love or glory's course.

Mab. Enough of words—

Pal. As boldly I've avow'd

The love I bear that hero at your feet,

I'll now to him, and fire his gen'rous breast,

To prove the duty he has sworn to thee. [Exit *Pal*.

Mab. Confusion! must I, spite of me, be made

The confident of her incestuous passion?

What could I say? Such sweet simplicity

Lur'd down my rage, and innocently wing'd

The arrow through my heart. And, shall I bear this?

Be made the sport of curst *Alcanor's* house?

Check'd in my rapid progress by the fire,

Supplanted in my love by this rash boy,

And made a gentle pander to the daughter?

Perdition on the whole detested race!

Enter *Mirvan*.

Mir. Now, *Mahomet*, 's the time to seize on

Crush this *Alcanor*, and enjoy *Palмира*. [Mecca,

This night the old enthusiast offers incense

To his vain gods in sacred Caabo.

Zaphna, who flames with zeal for Heav'n and thee,

May be won o'er to seize that lucky moment.

Mab. He shall; it must be so; he's born to act

The glorious crime; and let him be at once

The instrument and victim of the murder.

My law, my love, my vengeance, my own safety,

Have doom'd it so.—But, *Mirvan*, dost thou think

His youthful courage, nurs'd in superstition,

Can e'er be work'd—

Mir. I tell thee, *Mahomet*,

He's tutor'd to accomplish thy design.

Palмира too, who thinks thy will is Heav'n's,

Will nerve his arm to execute thy pleasure.

Love and enthusiasm blind her youth:

They're still most zealous, who're most ignorant.

Mab. Didst thou engage him by a solemn vow?

Mir. I did, with all th' enthusiastic pomp

Thy law enjoins; then gave him, as from thee,

A consecrated sword, to act thy will.

Oh, he is burning with religious fury!

Mab. But hold, he comes——

Enter Zaphna.

Child of that awful and tremendous pow'r,
Whose laws I publish, whose behests proclaim,
Listen, whilst I unfold his sacred will.

'Tis thine to vindicate his ways to man,

'Tis thine his injur'd worship to avenge.

Zaph. Thou lord of nations, delegate of Heav'n,
Sent to shed day o'er the benighted world,
Oh, say, in what can Zaphna prove his duty?
Instruct me how a frail, earth-prison'd mortal,
Can or avenge, or vindicate a god.

Mab. By thy weak arm he deigns to prove his cause,
And launch his vengeance on blaspheming rebels.

Zaph. What glorious action, what illustrious danger,
Does that Supreme, whose image thou demand!
Place me, oh! place me in the front of battle,
'Gainst odds innumerable; try me there;
Or, if a single combat claim my might,
The stoutest Arab may step forth, and see
If Zaphna fail to greet him as he ought.

Mab. Qh, greatly aid, my son; 'tis inspiration!
But heed me: 'tis not by a glaring act
Of human valour, Heav'n has will'd to prove thee;
This infidels themselves may boast, when led
By ostentation, rage, or brute-like rashness.
To do what'er Heav'n gives in sacred charge,
Nor dare to sound it's fathomless decrees,
This, and this only's meritorious zeal.
Attend, adore, obey; thou shalt be arm'd
By death's remorseless angel, which awaits me.

Zaph. Speak out, pronounce: what victim must
I offer?

What tyrant sacrifice? Whose blood requir'st thou?

Mab. The blood of a detested infidel,
A murderer, a foe to Heav'n and me,
A wretch who slew my child, blasphemes my god,
And like a huge Colossus bears a world
Of impious opposition to my faith;
The blood of curst Alcanor.

Zaph. I!——Alcanor!

Mab. What! dost thou hesitate! Rash youth, be-
He that deliberates is sacrilegious. [ware,

Far, far from me be those audacious mortals,
Who for themselves would impiously judge,
Or see with their own eyes; who dares to think,
Was never born a proselyte for me.

Know who I am; know, on this very spot,
I've charg'd thee with the just decree of Heav'n;
And when that Heav'n requires of thee no more
Than the bare off'ring of it's deadliest foe,
Nay, thy foe too, and mine; why dost thou balance,
As thy own father were the victim claim'd!
Go, vile idolator, false mussulman,
Go seek another master; a new faith.

Zaph. Oh, Mahomet!

Mab. Just when the prize is ready,
When fair Palmira's destin'd to thy arms——
But what's Palmira? or what's Heav'n to thee,
Thou poor, weak rebel to thy faith and love?
Go, serve and cringe to our detested foe?

Zaph. Oh, pardon, Mahomet! methinks I hear
The oracle of Heav'n—it shall be done.

Mab. Obey then, strike, and for his impious blood,
Palmira's charms and paradise be thine. [Exeunt.

Zaph. [Alone.] Soft, let me think—this duty
wears the face

Of something more than monstrous—pardon, Heav'n!
To sacrifice an innocent old man,
Weigh'd down with age, unsuccour'd, and unarm'd!
When I am hostage for his safety too!——
No matter, Heav'n has chose me for the duty,

My vow is pass'd, and must be straight fulfill'd,
Ye stern, relentless ministers of wrath,
Spirits of vengeance, by whose ruthless hands
The haughty tyrants of the earth have blest,
Come to my succour; to my flaming zeal
Join your determin'd courage;
And thou, angel
Of Mahomet, exterminating angel,
That mow'st down nations to prepare his passage,
Support my faltering will, harden my heart,
Lest nature, pity, plead Alcanor's cause,
And wrest the dagger from me.——
Hah! who comes here?

Enter Alcanor.

Alc. Whence, Zaphna, that deep gloom,
That like a blasting mildew on the ear
Of promis'd harvest, blackens o'er thy visage?
Grieve not that here, through form, thou art con-
I hold thee not as hostage, but as friend, [fin'd;
And make thy safety partner with my own.

Zaph. [Apart.] And make my safety partner
with thy own!

Alc. The bloody carnage, by this truce suspended
For a few moments, like a torrent check'd
In it's full flow, will with redoubled strength
Bear all before it.——

In this impending scene of public horror,
Be then, dear youth, these mansions thy asylum.
I'll be thy hostage now, and with my life
Will answer that no mischief shall befall thee.

I know not why, but thou art precious to me.

Zaph. [Apart.] Heav'n, duty, gratitude, hu-
manity!——

What did'st thou say, Alcanor? Did'st thou say,
That thy own roof should shield me from the tempest?
That thy own life stood hostage for my safety?

Alc. Why thus amaz'd at my compassion for thee?
I am a man myself, and that's enough
To make me feel the woes of other men,
And labour to redress 'em.——

Zaph. [Apart.] What melody these accents make!
And whilst my own religion spurs to murder,
His precepts of humanity prevail.——

Can then a foe to Mahomet's sacred law, [To Alc,
Be virtue's friend?

Alc. Thou know'st but little, Zaphna,
If thou dost think true virtue is confin'd
To climes or systems; no, it flows spontaneous,
Like life's warm stream, throughout the whole crea-
And beats the pulse of ev'ry healthful heart. [tion,
How can'st thou, Zaphna, worship for thy god
A being claiming cruelty and murders
From his adorers? Such is thy master's god——

Zaph. [Apart.] Oh, my relenting soul! thou'rt
almost thaw'd

From thy resolve.—I pray you, Sir, no more.
Peace, reason, peace!

Alc. [Apart.] The more I view him, talk with
him, observe

His understanding tow'ring 'bove his age;
His candour, which e'en bigotry can't smother;
The more my breast takes interest in his welfare.——
[To Zaphna.] Zaphna, come near—I oft have
thought to ask thee,

To whom thou bow'st thy birth; whose gen'rous blood
Swells thy young veins, and mantles at thy heart.

Zaph. That dwells in darkness, no one friendly
beam

Ere gave me glimpse from whom I am descended.
The camp of godlike Mahomet has been
My cradle, and my country; whilst, of all
His captive infants, no one more has shar'd
The sunshine of his clemency and care.

Alc. I do not blame thy gratitude, young man.
But why was Mahomet thy benefactor!
Why was not I! I envy him that glory.
Why then this impious man has been a father
Alike to thee, and to the fair Palmira?

Zoph. Oh!

Alc. What's the cause, my Zaphna, of that sigh,
And all that language of a smother'd anguish;
Why didst thou snatch away thy cordial eye,
That shone on me before?

Zoph. [*Apart.*] Oh, my torn heart!
Palmira's name revives the racking thought
Of my near blunted purpose.

Alc. Come, my friend.
The flood-gates of destruction soon thrown ope,
Will pour in ruin on that curse of nations.
If I can save but thee, and fair Palmira,
From this o'erflowing tide, let all the rest
Of his abandon'd minions be the victims
For your deliverance—I must save your blood.

Zoph. [*Apart.*] Just Heav'n! and is't not I must
shed his blood?

Alc. Nay, tremble! if thou dar'st to hesitate,
Follow me straight.

Enter Pharon.

Pha. Alcanor, read that letter,
Put in my hands this moment by an Arab,
With utmost stealth, and air bespeaking somewhat
Of high importance.

Alc. [*Reads.*] Whence is this?—Hercides!
Cautious, my eyes! be sure you're not mistaken
In what you here insinuate. Gracious Heav'n!
Will then thy Providence at length o'er-rule
My wayward fate, and, by one matchless blessing,
Sweeten the suff'rings of a threescore years!

[*After looking for some time earnestly at Zaphna.*
Follow me.

Zoph. Thee!—But Mahomet—

Alc. Thy life,
And all it's future bliss, dwells on this moment.
Follow, I say. [*Exeunt Alc. and Pha.*
Enter Mirvan and his Attendants hastily on the other
Side of the Stage.

Mir. [*To Zaph.*] Traitor, turn back; what means
This conference with the foe? To Mahomet
Away, this instant; he commands thy presence.

Zoph. [*Apart.*] Where am I? Heav'n's! How
shall I now resolve!

How act! A precipice on ev'ry side,
And the first, least step's perdition.

Mir. Young man, our prophet brooks not such
delay;

Go, stop the bolt that's ready to be launch'd
On thy rebellious head.

Zoph. Yes, and renounce

This horrid vow, that's poison to my soul.

[*Exit with Mir. &c.*

Re-enter Alcanor and Pharon.

Alc. Where is this Zaphna?—But he flies me;
In vain I call in all the soft'ning arts
Of pity, love, and friendship, to engage him:
His breast is fear'd by that impostor's precepts,
'Gainst all who bid defiance to his laws.

But, Pharon, didst thou mark the baneful gloom,
The somewhat like reluctance, rage, and pity,
That blended sat upon his pensive brow?

Pha. I did; there's something at his heart—

Alc. There is—

Would I could fathom it! This letter, Pharon,
His aspect, age; the transport that I taste
When he is near me; the anxiety
His absence gives; do too much violence
To my distracted sense. Hercides, here

Desires to see me; 'twas his barbarous hands
That robb'd me of my children; they are living,
He tells me, under Mahomet's protection;
And he has something to unfold, on which
Their destiny and mine depends. This Zaphna,
And young Palmira, vassals of that tyrant,
Are ignorant from whom they are descended.
Imagination's pregnant with the thought!
My wishes mock me. Sinking with my grief,
I blindly catch at ev'ry flatt'ring error,
And supplicate deception's self for succour.

Pha. Hope, but yet fear; Alcanor; think, my
How many infants from their parents torn, [chief,
E'er conscious whose they are, attend that tyrant,
Drink in his dictates, place their being in him,
And deem him an infallible dispenser
Of Heaven's decisions—

Alc. Well, no matter, Pharon.

At noon of night conduct Hercides hither;
Thy master, in th' adjoining sene, once more
Will importune the gods with prayers and incense,
That he may save his friends, and see his children.

Pha. Thou shalt not find thy Pharon slack in aught,
That tends to thy deliverance from this anguish.

[*Exit Pharon.*

Alc. Just Heav'n, if by erroneous thought or act,
I have drawn down your fierce displeasure on me,
Point me to right; I'll onward to it's goal
With double energy; will expiate all,
That in the days of ignorance might offend.
Only restore my children to my care,
Give to my craving arms my hapless children,
That I may form them, turn 'em back from wrong,
Weed their young minds of those pernicious errors
The arch-impostor has implanted in 'em;
Train 'em in virtue's school, and lead them on
To deeds of glorious and immortal honour.

A C T IV.

SCENE, Mahomet's Apartment.

Mab. AMBITION knows not conscience—
Well, this Zaphna
Is fix'd at length—I lesson'd him so home,
Dealt to his young enthusiastic soul
Such promises and threats—

Enter Mirvan.

Mirvan, what news?

Mir. Oh, Mahomet! I fear the nice-wov'n web
Of our design's unravell'd. E'er thy spirit
Had re-inflam'd young Zaphna with the thirst
Of old Alcanor's blood, he had reveal'd
The dreadful purpose to Hercides—

Mab. Hah!

Mir. Hercides loves the youth, and Zaphna still
Has held him as a father.

Mab. That I like not.

What does Hercides say? thinks he with us?

Mir. Oh, no; he trembles at the very thought
Of this dread scene, compassionates Alcanor,
And—

Mab. He's but a half-friend then, and a half-friend
Is not a spy from traitor. Mirvan, Mirvan,
A dangerous witness must be some way dealt with;
Am I obey'd?

Mir. 'Tis done.

Mab. Then for the rest—

Or e'er the harbinger of morrow's dawn
Gleam in the east, Alcanor, thou must set,
Or Mahomet and all his hopes must perish.
That's the first step then—Zaphna, next for thee.
Soon as thy hands have dealt the midnight mischief,

In thy own blood the secret must be drown'd.
Thus quit of son and father (those curst rivals,
Who elbow me at once in love and grandeur,)
Both Mecca and Palmira shall be mine.
Oh, tow'ring prospect! How it fills the eye
Of my aspiring and enamour'd soul!
Night, put on double sable, that no star
May be a spy on those dark deeds—Well, Mirvan,
Shall we accomplish this?

Mir. We shall, my chief.

Mab. What tho' I seize his life from whom the
spring?

He's not her father, as she knows it not.
Trust me, those partial ties of blood and kindred,
Are but the illusive taints of education:
What we call nature, is mere habit, Mirvan;
That habit's on our side; for the whole study
Of this young creature's life has been obedience;
To think, believe, and act, as pleasur'd me.
But hold, the hour on which our fortune hangs,
Is now at hand. While Zaphna seeks the temple,
Let us look round us, see that not a wheel
Lag in the vast machine we have at work.
It is success that consecrates our actions.

The vanquish'd rebel, as a rebel dies;
The victor-rebel plumes him on a throne. *[Exeunt*

SCENE changes to the Temple.

Enter Zaphna, with a drawn Sword in his Hand.

Zaph. Well then, it must be so; I must discharge
This cruel duty—Mahomet enjoins it,
And Heav'n, thro' him, demands it of my hands.
Horrid, though sacred act!—My soul shrinks back,
And won't admit conviction—Ay, but Heav'n!
Heav'n's call I must obey—Oh, dire obedience,
What dost thou cost me! My humanity!
Why, duty, art thou thus at war with nature?

Enter Palmira.

Thou here, Palmira! Oh, what fatal transport
Leads thee to this sad place, these dark abodes,
Sacred to death? Thou hast no business here.

Pal. Oh, Zaphna! fear and love have been my
guides.

What horrid sacrifice is this enjoin'd thee?

What victim does the god of Mahomet
Claim from thy tender hand?

Zaph. Oh, my guardian angel,
Speak, resolve me;
How can assassination be a virtue?
How can the gracious parent of mankind
Delight in mankind's suff'rings? Mayn't this pro-
This great announcer of his heav'nly will, *[phet,*
Mistake it once?

Pal. Oh, tremble to examine.

He sees our hearts—To doubt, is to blaspheme.

Zaph. Be steady then, my soul, firm to thy pur-
And let religion steel thee against pity. *[pose,*
Come forth, thou foe to Mahomet and Heav'n,
And meet the doom thy rebel faith deserves;
Come forth, Alcanor.

Pal. Who, Alcanor!

Zaph. Yes.

Pal. The good Alcanor?

Zaph. Good!

Curse on his pagan virtues! He must die;
So Mahomet commands! And yet, methinks,
Some other deity arrests my arm,
And whispers to my heart—Zaphna, forbear.

Pal. Distracting state!

Zaph. Alas, my dear Palmira,
I'm weak, and shudder at this bloody bus'ness.
Help me, O help, Palmira! I am torn,
Distracted with this conflict.

Zaph. Alas, my dear Palmira, I am torn,
Distracted with this conflict.

And drag it diff'rent ways. Alas! Palmira,
You see me tossing on a sea of passions;
'Tis thine, my angel, to appease this tempest,
Fix my distracted will, and teach me—

Pal.—What?

What can I teach thee in this strife of passions?

Oh, Zaphna! I revere our holy prophet,
Think all his laws are register'd in heav'n,
And ev'ry mandate minted in the skies.

Zaph. But then, to break through hospitality,
And murder him by whom we are protected!

Pal. Oh, poor Alcanor! gen'rous, good Alcanor!
My heart bleeds for thee.

Zaph. Know then, unless I act this horrid scene,
Unless I plunge this dagger in the breast
Of that old man, I must—I must—

Pal. What—

Zaph. Must, Palmira—

(Oh, agonizing thought!) lose thee for ever.

Pal. Am I the price of good Alcanor's blood?

Zaph. So Mahomet ordains.

Pal. Horrible dowry!

Zaph. Thou know'st the curse our prophet has
denounc'd,

Of endless tortures, on the disobedient:
Thou know'st with what an oath I've bound myself,
To vindicate his laws, extirpate all

That dare oppose his progress. Say then, fair-one,
Thou tutorest divine, instruct me how,
How to obey my chief, perform my oath,
Yet list to mercy's call.

Pal. This rends my heart.

Zaph. How to avoid being banish'd thee for ever.

Pal. Oh, save me from that thought! must that
e'er be?

Zaph. It must not: thou hast now pronounc'd his
Pal. What doom?—Have I! *[doom.*

Zaph. Yes, thou hast seal'd his death.

Pal. I seal his death!—Did I?

Zaph. 'Twas heav'n's spoke by thee; thou't it's
And I'll fulfil it's laws. 'This is the hour *[oracle,*

In which he pays, at the adjoining altar,
Black rites to his imaginary gods.

Follow me not, Palmira.

Pal. I must follow;

I will not, dare not leave thee.

Zaph. Gentle maid,

I beg thee fly these walls; thou can'st not bear
This horrid scene—Oh, these are dreadful moments!

Be gone—quick—this way—

Pal. No, I'll follow thee,

Retread thy ev'ry footstep, though they lead
To the dark gulph of death.

Zaph. Thou matchless maid!—To the dire trial
then. *[Exeunt.*

*SCENE draws, and discovers the Inner Part of the
Temple with a Pagan Altar and Images. Alcanor*

addressing himself to the Idols.

Alc. Eternal powers, that deign to bless these
Protectors of the sons of Ishmael, *[manious,*

Crush, crush this blasphemous invader's force,
And turn him back with shame. If pow'r be yours,

Oh, shield your injur'd votaries, and lay
Oppression bleeding at your altar's foot.

Enter Zaphna and Palmira.

Pal. *[Entering.]* Act not this bloody deed. Oh!
save him, save him.

Zaph. Save him, and lose both paradise and thee!

Pal. Hah, yon he stands—Oh, Zaphna! all my
is frozen at the sight. *[blood*

Alc. 'Tis in your own behalf that I implore
The terrors of your might; twist, swiftly

Pour vengeance on this vile apostate's head,

Who dares profanely wrest your thunder from you,
And lodge it with an unknown, fancied god.

Zeph. Hear how the wretch blasphemes! So,

Pal. Hold, Zaphna.

[now—

Zeph. Let me go—

Pal. I cannot—cannot.

Alc. But if, for reasons which dim-sighted mortals
Can't look into, you'll crown this daring rebel
With royalty and priesthood, take my life.

And if, ye gracious pow'rs, you've aught of bliss
In store for me, at my last hour permit me
To see my children, pour my blessing on them,
Expire in their dear arms; and let them close
These eyes, which then would wish no after-sight.

Pal. His children, did he say?

Zeph. I think he did—

Alc. For this I'll at your altar pay my vows,
And make it smoke with incense. [Retires behind.

Zeph. [Drawing his sword.] Insulting heav'n,
he lies to stones for refuge:

Now let me strike.

Pal. Stay but one moment, Zaphna.

Zeph. It must not be—onhand me.

Pal. What to do!

Zeph. To serve my god and king, and merit thee.

[Breaking from Palmira, and going towards the
Altar, he starts, and stops short.

Ha! what are ye, ye terrifying shades!

What means this lake of blood that lies before me!

Pal. Oh, Zaphna, let us fly these horrid roofs.

Zeph. No, no—Go, on, ye ministers of death;
Lead me the way. I'll follow ye.

Pal. Stay, Zaphna,

Heap no more horrors on me; I'm expiring
Beneath the load.

Zeph. Be hush'd—the altar trembles!

What means that omen? Does it spur to murder,
Or would it rein me back? No, 'tis the voice
Of Heav'n itself, that chides my ling'ring hand.

Now send up thither all thy vows, Palmira,
Whilst I obey it's will, and give the stroke.

[Goes out behind the Altar after Alcanor.

Pal. What vows! will Heav'n receive a murder's
vows?

For sure I'm such, whilst I prevent not murder.
Why beats my heart thus? What soft voice is this
That's waken'd in my soul, and preaches mercy?
If Heav'n demands his life, dare I oppose?
Is it my place to judge?—Hah! that dire groan
Proclaims the bloody business is about.

Zaphna! Oh, Zaphna!

Re-enter Zaphna.

Zeph. Hah, where am I?

Who calls me? Where's Palmira? She's not here:
What fiend has snatch'd her from me?

Pal. Heavens! he raves!

Dost thou not know me, Zaphna? Her who lives
For thee alone?—Why dost thou gaze thus on me?

Zeph. Where are we?

Pal. Hast thou then discharg'd
The horrid duty?

Zeph. What dost thou say?

Pal. Alcanor—

Zeph. Alcanor! what Alcanor?

Pal. Gracious Heaven,
Look down upon him!

Let's be gone, my Zaphna,

Let's fly this place.

Zeph. Oh, whither fly! to whom?

D'ye see these hands? Who will receive these hands?

Pal. O! come, and let me wash them with my tears!

Zeph. Who art thou? let me lean on thee—I find

My pow'rs returning. Is it thou, Palmira?

Where have I been? What have I done?

Pal. I know not.

Think on't no more.

Zeph. But I must think, and talk on't too, Pal—
I seiz'd the victim by his hoary locks— [mira.
(Thou, Heav'n, didst will it)

Then, shuddering with horror, buried straight
The poignard in his breast. I had redoubled
The bloody plunge—(what cannot zeal persuade!)
But that the venerable fire pour'd forth
So piteous a groan! look'd so, Palmira—
And with a feeble voice, cry'd, is it Zaphna?
I could no more. Oh, hadst thou seen, my love,
The fell, fell dagger in his bosom, view'd
His dying face, where sat such dignity,
Cloath'd with compassion tow'ards his base assassin.
The dire remembrance weighs me to the earth—
Here let me die—

Pal. Rise, my lov'd Zaphna, rise,
And let us fly to Mah'met for protection.
If we are found in these abodes of slaughter,
Tortures and death attend us; let us fly.

Zeph. [Starting up.] I did fly at that blasting
fight, Palmira.

When, drawing out the fatal steel, he cast
Such tender looks! I fled—The fatal steel,
The voice, the tender looks, the bleeding victim
Blessing his murderer, I could not fly:
No, they clung to me, riv'd my throbbing heart,
And set my brain on fire. What have we done?

Pal. Hark! What's that noise? I tremble for
thy life.

Oh! in the name of love, by all the ties,
Those sacred ties that bind thee mine for ever,
I do conjure thee follow me.

[Alcanor comes from behind the Altar, leaning
against it, with the bloody sword in his hand.

Zeph. Hah! look, Palmira, see what object's that
Which bears upon my tortur'd sight? Is't he?
Or is't his bloody manes come to haunt us?

Pal. 'Tis he himself, poor wretch! struggling
with death,

And feebly crawling tow'rs us. Let me fly,
And yield what help I can.—Let me support thee,
Thou much-lamented, injur'd, good old man.

Zeph. Why don't I move? My feet are rooted here,
And all my frame is struck, and wither'd up,
As with a lightning's blast.

Alc. My gentle maid,

Wilt thou support me?

Weep not, my Palmira.

Pal. I could weep tears of blood, if that would
serve thee.

Alc. [Sitting down.] Zaphna, come hither: thou
hast ta'en my life;

For what offence, or what one thought towards thee
That anger or malevolence gave birth,
Heav'n knows I am unconscious. Do not look so:
I see, thou dost relent.

Enter Pharon, hastily.

Pal. [Starting back.] Hah! 'tis too late, then.

Alc. Would I could see Hercules!—Pharon, lo!

Thy martyr'd friend, by his distemper'd hand,
Is now expiring.

Pha. Dire, unnatt'ral crime!

Oh, wretched parricide!—behold thy father.

Zeph. My father!

Pal. Father! Hah!

Alc. Mysterious Heav'n!

Pha. Hercules, dying by the hand of Mirvan,

Who slew him lest he should betray the secret,

Saw me approach, and, in the pangs of death,

Cry'd, Fly, and save Alcanor; wrest the sword

From Zaphna's hands, if 'tis not yet too late,
That's destin'd for his death; then let him know
That Zaphna and Palmira are his children.

Pal. That Zaphna and Palmira are his children!
—Dost hear that, Zaphna?

Zaph. 'Tis enough, my fate! —
Canst thou aught more!

Alc. Oh, nature! oh, my children!
By what vile instigations wert thou driven,
Unhappy Zaphna, to this bloody action?

Zaph. [*Falling at his father's feet.*] Oh, I cannot speak!

Restore me, Sir; restore that damned weapon;
That I for once may make it, as I ought,
An instrument of justice.

Pal. [*Kneeling.*] Oh! my father,
Strike here; the crime was mine; 'twas I alone,
That work'd his will to this unnatural deed.
Upon those terms alone he cou'd be mine;
And incest was the price of parricide.

Zaph. Strike your assassins —

Alc. I embrace my children;
And joy to see them, though my life's the forfeit.
Rise, children, rise and live; I live to revenge
Your father's death. — But, in the name of nature,
By the remains of this paternal blood
That's oozing from my wound, raise not your hands
'Gainst your own being. Zaphna, would'st thou do
A second deadlier mischief? [*me*]

Self-slaughter can't atone for parricide.
Zaph. Then I will live,
Live to some purpose; this is glorious suffering.

Alc. Thy undetermin'd arm han't quite fulfill'd
It's bigot-purpose; I hope to live; to animate
Our friends 'gainst this impostor; lead 'em, Zaphna,
To root out a rapacious, baneful crew,
Whose zeal is phrenzy, whose religion murder.

Zaph. Swift, swift, ye hours! and light me to
Come, thou infernal weapon, [*revenge!*]

[*Snatches the bloody sword.*]
I'll wash off thy foul stain with the heart's blood
Of that malignant, sanctified assassin.

[*As Zaphna is going off, Mirvan and his followers enter, and stop him.*]

Mir. Seize Zaphna;
And load the traitorous murderer with chains.
Help you the good Alcanor. — Hapless man!
Our prophet, in a vision, learnt to-night
The mournful tale of thy untimely end,
And sent me straight to seize the vile assassin,
That he might wreak severest justice on him.
Mahomet comes to vindicate the laws,
Not suffer, with impunity, their breach.

Alc. Heav'n's! what accumulated crimes are here!
Zaph. Where is the monster? Bear me instant to
him,

That I may blast him with my eye, may curse him
With my last hesitating voice.

Pal. Thou traitor,
Did not thy own death-doing tongue enjoin
This horrid deed?

Mir. Not mine, by Heav'n!

Zaph. Not thine!

Mir. No, by our prophet, and his holy faith,
Of all the thoughts e'er harbour'd in this breast,
It ne'er had such a monster for its tenant.

Zaph. Most accomplish'd villain! —

Mirvan, look at me — dar'st thou —

Mir. Off with him, [*To the Soldiers.*]
And see him well secur'd, till Mahomet
Demands him of you.

Pal. Villain, hold! [*Laying hold of Zaphna.*]

Mir. Away!

Zaph. Just, just reward of my credulity!

Pal. Let me go with him — I will share thy fate,
Unhappy Zaphna, for I share thy guilt. —
But then — [*Looking back at Alcanor.*]

Mir. No more — you must to Mahomet.
Obey without reluctance; our great prophet,
In pity to your tender frame and years,
Will take you under his divine protection.

Pal. [*Apart.*] Oh, death, deliver me from such
protection!

Mir. If you would aught to save the destin'd
Zaphna,

Follow me to the prophet, you may move him
To mitigate his doom. — Away!

[*To the Soldiers, who hold Zaphna.*]
— You, this way. [*To Palmira.*]

Zaph. Pardon!

Pal. Oh, pardon!

[*They are led off by degrees, looking alternately
at their father, and each other.*]

Alc. Oh, insupportable!

Both from me torn, then when I wanted most
Their consolation. [*A shout.*]

Pha. Hark!

The citizens are rous'd, and all in arms
Rush on to your defence.

Alc. Pharon, support me [*'em,*
Some moments longer. — Help, conduct me to wards
Bare this wound to 'em; let that speak the cause,
The treach'rous cause, for words begin to fail me:
I then, if in death I can but serve my country,
Save my poor children from this tyger's gripe,
And give a second life to that lov'd pair,
By whose misguided zeal I lose my own;
What patriot, or parent, but would wish,
In so divine a cause, to fall a martyr! [*Exeunt.*]

A C T V.

Enter Mahomet and Mirvan.

Mab. **W** R O N G will be ever nurs'd and fed
with blood —

So, this boy-bigot held his pious purpose?

Mir. Devoutly.

Mab. What a reasonless machine
Can superstition make the reas'ner man!
Alcanor lies there on his bed of earth?

Mir. This moment he expir'd, and Mecca's youth
In vain lament their chief. To the mad crowd
That gather'd round, good Ali and myself,
(Full of thy dauntless, heav'nly-seeming spirit)
Disclaim'd the deed, and pointed out the arm
Of righteous Heav'n, that strikes for Mahomet. —
Think ye, we cried, (with eyes and hands uprear'd)
Think ye our holy prophet would consent
To such a crime, whose foulness calls a blot
On right of nations, nature, and our faith?
Oh! rather think he will revenge his death,
And root his murder from the burden'd earth!
Then struck our breasts, and wept the good old man;
And only wish'd he'd dy'd among the faithful,
And slept with Ibrahim.

Mab. Excellent Mirvan!

Mir. We then, both at large
Descanted on thy clemency and bounty.
On that, the silent and desponding crowd
Broke out in murmurs, plaints, and last in shouts,
And each mechanic grew a muskman.

Mab. Oh, worthy to deceive, and awe the world,
Second to Mahomet! let me embrace thee. —
But say, is not our army at their gates,
To back our clemency?

Mir. Omar commands.

Their nightly march thro' unsuspected paths,
And with the morn appears.

Mab. At sight of them,

The weak remaining billows of this storm
Will lash themselves to peace—But where is Zaphna?

Mir. Safe in a dungeon, where he dies apace,
Unconscious of his fate; for well thou know'st,
Ere at the altar's foot he flew his fire,

In his own veins he bore his guilt's reward,
A deadly draught of poison.

Mab. I would be kind, and let him die deceiv'd,
Nor know that parent blood defiles his soul.

Mir. He cannot know it: if the grave be silent,
I'm sure Hercules is—

Mab. Unhappy Zaphna!

Something like pity checks me for thy death.

But why—I must not think that way—shall Maho-
Give a new paradise to all mankind, [met

And let remorse of conscience be the hell

Of his own breast! My safety claim'd his life,

And all the heav'n of fair Palmira's charms

Shall be my great reward.

Mir. My noble lord,

Palmira is at hand, and waits your pleasure.

Mab. At hand! How, Mirvan, could'st thou
let me talk

On themes of guilt, when that pure angel's near?

Mir. The weeping fair, led on by flatt'ring hope

Of Zaphna's life, attends your sacred will.

A silent, pale dejection, throws her cheeks,

And, like the lily in a morning show'r,

She droops her head, and locks up all her sweets.

Mab. Say Mahomet awaits, and then

Assemble all our chiefs, and on this platform

Let them attend me straight. [Exit Mirvan.

Enter Palmira, with Attendants.

Pal. [Apart.] Where have they led me?

Methinks, each step I take, the mangled corse

Of my dear father, (by poor Zaphna mangled)

Lies in my way, and all I see is blood— [Starting.

'Tis the impostor's self!—Burst, heart, in silence.

Mab. Maid, lay aside this dread. Palmira's fate,

And that of Mecca, by my will is fix'd.

This great event, that fills thy soul with horror,

Is mystery to all but Heav'n and Mahomet.

Pal. Oh, ever-righteous Heaven! canst thou suffer

This sacrilegious hypocrite, this spoiler,

To steal thy terrors, and blaspheme thy name,

Nor doom him instant dead?

[Aside.

Mab. Child of my care,

At length, from galling chains I've set thee free,

And made thee triumph in a just revenge:

Think, then, thou'rt dear to me; and Mahomet

Regards thee with a more than father's eye:

Then know, (if thou'lt deserve the mighty boon)

An higher name, a nobler fate awaits thee.

Pal. What would the tyrant?—

Mab. Raise thy thoughts to glory,

And sweep this Zaphna from thy memory,

With all that's past—Let that mean flame expire,

Before the blaze of empire's radiant sun.

Thy grateful heart must answer to my bounties,

Follow my laws, and share in all my conquests.

Pal. What laws, what bounties, and what con-
quests, tyrant?

Fraud is thy law, the tomb thy only bounty;

Thy conquests fatal as infected air,

Dispeopling half the globe—See here, good Heav'n,

The venerable prophet I rever'd,

The king I serv'd, the god that I ador'd.

Mab. [Approaching her.] Whence this unwonted
language, this wild phrenzy?

Pal. Where is the spirit of my martyr'd father?

Where Zaphna's? Where Palmira's innocence?

Blasted by thee, by thee, infernal monster—

Thou found'st us angels, and hast made us fiends:

Give, give us back our lives; our fame, our virtue!

Thou canst not, tyrant—yet thou seek'st my love;

Seek'st, with Alcanor's blood, his daughter's love,

Mab. [Apart.] Horror and death! the fatal se-
cret's known.

Enter Mirvan.

Mir. Oh, Mahomet, all's lost, thy glory tarnish'd,

And th' insatiate tomb ripe to devour us!

Hercides' parting breath divulg'd the secret;

The prison's forc'd, the city all in arms.

See where they bear aloft their murder'd chief,

Feil Zaphna in their front; death in his looks,

Rage all his strength. Spite of the deadly draught,

He holds in life but to make sure of vengeance.

Mab. What dost thou here, then? Instant with
our guards,

Attempt to stem their progress, till th' arrival

Of Omar with the troops.

Mir. I haste, my lord.

[Exit Mirvan.

Pal. Now, now, my hour's at hand.

Hear'st thou those shouts that rend the ambient air?

Seest thou those glancing fires, that add new horrors

To the night's gloom? Fresh from thy murder's

poignard,

(For thine it was, tho' Zaphna gave the blow)

My father's spirit leads the vengeful shades

Of all the wretches whom thy sword has butcher'd.

I see them raise their unsubstantial arms

To snatch me from thy rage, or worse, thy love.

Shadows shall conquer in Palmira's cause.

Mab. [Apart.] What terror's this that hangs
upon her accents!

I feel her virtue, tho' I know her weakness.

Pal. Thou ask'st my love; go, seek it in the grave

Of good Alcanor—Talk'st of grateful minds;

Bid Zaphna plead for thee, and I may hear thee.

Till then, thou art my scorn—May'st thou, like me;

Behold thy dearest blood spilt at thy feet.

Mecca, Medina, all our Asian world,

Join, join to drive th' impostor from the earth;

Blush at his chains, and shake them off in vengeance!

Mab. [Apart.] Be still, my soul, nor let a woman's

Ruffle thy wonted calm—Spite of thy hate, [rage

Thou'rt lovely still, and charming ev'n in madness.

[A shout, and noise of fighting.

My fair, retire; nor let thy gentle soul

Shake with alarms; thou'rt my peculiar care.

I go to quell this trait'rous insurrection,

And will attend thee straight.

Pal. No, tyrant, no;

I'll join my brother, help to head our friends,

And urge them on.

[A shout.

Roll, roll your thunders, Heav'n's, and aid the storm,

Now hurl your lightning on the guilty head,

And plead the cause of injur'd innocence. [Exit Pal.

Enter Ali.

Mab. Whence, Ali, that surprise?

Ali. My royal chief,

The foe prevails—Thy troops, led on by Mirvan,

Are all cut off, and valiant Mirvan's self,

By Zaphna slain, lies weltring in his blood.

The guard that to our arms should ope the gates,

Struck with the common phrenzy, vow thy rola;

And death, and vengeance, is the general cry.

Mab. Can Ali fear? Then, Mahomet, be thyself.

Ali. See, thy few friends, whom wild despair

hath arm'd,

(But arm'd in vain) are come to die beside thee.

Mab. Ye heartless traitors! Mahomet alone

Shall be his own defender, and your guard,
Against the crowds of Mecca—Follow me.

*Enter Zaphna, Palmira, and Pharon, with Citizens,
and the body of Alcanor on a bier.*

Mab. Ha!

Zaph. See, my friends, where the impostor stands:
With head erect, as if he knew not guilt;
As if no tongue spake from Alcanor's wound,
Nor call'd for vengeance on him.

Mab. Impious man!

Is't not enough to've spilt thy parent-blood;
But with atrocious and blaspheming lips,
Dar'st thou arraign the substitute of Heav'n?

Zaph. The substitute of Heav'n! so is the sword,
The pestilence, the famine; such art thou.
Such are the blessings Heav'n has sent to man
By thee, it's delegate: nay, more to me.
Oh, he took pains, Palmira, upon us,
Deluded us into such monstrous crimes,
As nature sicken'd at conception of!—
How could'st thou damn us thus?

Mab. Babler, avault!

[with thee,

Zaph. Well thou upbraids't me; for, to parley
Half brands me coward. Oh, revenge me, friends!
Revenge Alcanor's massacre: revenge
Palmira's wrongs, and crush the rancorous monster.

Mab. Hear me, ye slaves, born to obey my will.

Pal. Ah, hear him not! fraud dwells upon his
tongue.

Zaph. Have at thee, fiend—Ha! Heaven,

[*Zaph. advancing, rears, and reclines on his sword.*
What cloud is this
That thwarts upon my sight! My head grows dizzy,
My joints unloose: sure 'tis the stroke of fate.

Mab. [*Aside.*] The poison works!—Then triumph
Mahomet!

Zaph. Off, off base lethargy.

Pal. Brother, dismay'd;

Hast thou no pow'r, but in a guilty cause,
And only strength to be a parricide? [not be

Zaph. Spare that reproach—Come on—It will
[*Hangs down his sword, and reclines on Pharon.*

Some cruel pow'r unnerves my willing arm,
Blasts my resolves, and weighs me down to earth.

Mab. Such be the fate of all who brave our law.
Nature and death have heard my voice, and now
Let Heav'n be judge 'twixt Zaphna and myself,
And instant blast the guilty of the two.

Pal. Brother! Oh, Zaphna!

Zaph. Zaphna now no more.

[*Sinking down by Alcanor's body, and leaning
on the bier; Pharon kneeling down with him,
and supporting him.*

Down, down, good Pharon—Thou poor injur'd corse,
May I embrace thee? Won't thy pallid wound
Purple anew at the unnatural touch,
And ooze fresh calls for vengeance?

Pal. Oh, my brother!

Zaph. In vain's the guiltless meaning of my heart:
High Heaven detests th' involuntary crime,
And dooms for parricide—Then tremble, tyrant;
If the Supreme can punish error thus,
What new-invented tortures must await
Thy soul, grown leprous with such foul offences!
But soft—Now fate and nature are at strife.—
Sister, farewell; with transport should I quit
This toilsome, perilous, delusive stage,
But that I leave thee on't; leave thee, Palmira,
Expos'd to what is worse than fear can image,
That tyrant's mercy. But I know thee brave;

Know that thou'lt act a part—Look on her, Heaven,
Guide her, and—Oh!

Pal. Think not, ye men of Mecca,
This death inflicted by the hand of Heaven;
'Tis he—that viper—

Mab. Know, ye faithless wretches,
'Tis mine to deal the bolts of angry Heaven:
Behold them there; and let the wretch who doubts,
Tremble at Zaphna's fate, and know that Mahomet
Can read his thoughts, and doom him with a look.
Go, then, and thank your pontiff and your prince
For each day's sun he grants you to behold.
Hence, to your temples, and appease my rage.

[*The people go off.*
Pal. Ah, stay! my brother's murder'd by this ty-
By poison, not by piety, he kills.

Mab. 'Tis done—Thus ever be our law re-
ceiv'd!

Now, fair Palmira—

Pal. Monster! is it thus
Thou mak'st thyself a god, by added crimes,
And murders justify'd by sacrilege?

Mab. Think, exquisite Palmira, for thy sake—

Pal. Thou'lt been the murderer of all my race,
See where Alcanor, see where Zaphna lies;
Do they not call for me too, at thy hands?
Oh, that they did!—But I can read thy thoughts;
Palmira's sav'd for something worse than death;
This to prevent—Zaphna, I follow thee.

[*Stabs herself with Zaphna's sword.*
Mab. What hast thou done?

Pal. A deed of glory, tyrant!

Thou'lt left no object worth Palmira's eye;
And when I shut out light, I shut out thee.—[*Din.*

Mab. Farewel, dear victim of my boundless passion;
The price of treachery, the reward of murder,
Sink with thee to the earth—Oh, justice, justice!
In vain are glory, worship, and dominion!
All conqueror as I am, I am a slave;
And, by the world ador'd, dwell with the damn'd.
My crimes have planted scorpions in my breast—
Here, here, I feel them. 'Tis in vain to brave
The host of terrors that invade my soul;
I might deceive the world, myself I cannot.

Ali. Be calm a while, my lord, think what you are;

Mab. Ha! What am I? [Turning to the bier,
Ye breathless family,

Let your loud-crying wounds say what I am.
Oh, snatch me from that sight; quick, quick transport
To nature's loneliest mansion, where the sun
Ne'er enter'd, where the sound of human tread
Was never heard—But wherefore? Still I there,
There still shall find myself—Ay, that's the hell—
I'll none on't—[*Drawing his sword,*

Ali. Heav'n! help, hold him!

[*Ali, &c. disarm him.*

Mab. Petty dastards!

You fled the foe, but can disarm your master.
Angel of death, whose pow'r I've long proclaim'd,
Now aid me, if thou canst; now, if thou canst,
Draw the kind curtain of eternal night,
And shroud me from the horrors that beset me.

[*Exeunt Mahomet, &c.*
Pha. Oh, what a curse is life, when self-conscience
Flings our offences hourly in our face,
And turns existence torturer to itself!
Here let the mad enthusiast turn his eyes,
And see from bigotry what horrors rise;
Here, in the blackest colours, let him read,
That zeal, by craft misled, may act a deed,
By which both innocence and virtue bleed.